

restricted. By 1914, some three million people were employed in mining and large-scale enterprises; and strikes, more often political, became common after 1912. The massacre of 270 strikers in the Lena goldfields in 1912 created a huge protest movement involving half a million workers across Russia. The general unrest continued into the summer of 1914, which saw another massive strike. It was only when Russia went to war that a general atmosphere of unity was regained.

**CHECKPOINT 3.4**

Briefly describe the significance of each of the following ministers:

- i Pobedonostsev
- ii Witte
- iii Stolypin.

**Concluding Remarks**

- ◆ Be sure to assess the importance of the growing opposition of the middle class, whose actions were supported by discontented townspeople and peasants, to the autocratic system of government.
- ◆ Assess the impact that revolutionary parties had on the autocratic system.
- ◆ Understand that the preservation of autocracy was dependent on the strength of character of the Tsar. The accession of Nicholas II in 1894 resulted in Russia being led by a man who was emotionally committed to the principles of autocracy but who lacked the leadership and political skills to achieve that goal.

# 4 20th Century National Studies — Germany



Germany in 1918

**RELEVANT PROBLEMS AND ISSUES**

Revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces; effects of Versailles; development and implementation of a democratic constitution; collapse of democracy; role of the German army; changes in society; Nazism as totalitarianism; Hitler as Fuehrer; propaganda and terror; war.

**Timeline**

- **1918** — Kaiser abdicates. A republic is set up.
- **1919** — Germany signs the Treaty of Versailles.
- **1923 (January)** — Occupation of the Ruhr by French troops. Hyperinflation follows.
- **1923 (November)** — Hitler's Munich Putsch fails.
- **1929** — Death of Stresemann.
- **1933** — Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany.
- **1934** — 'The Night of the Long Knives'. Death of President Hindenburg.
- **1935** — Conscription reintroduced. Anti-Jewish Nuremberg Laws announced.
- **1936** — Reoccupation of the Rhineland. Economic Four-year Plan begins.
- **1939** — Invasion of Poland begins World War II.



## Major Personalities

**Bruning, Heinrich** — Chancellor of Germany during much of the Depression, 1930–32.

**Ebert, Friedrich** — Leader of the Social Democrats in 1918. First President of the Weimar Republic, 1919–25.

**Goebbels, Joseph** — Nazi Minister for Propaganda from 1933.

**Goering, Hermann** — Leading Nazi. In charge of the Four-year Plan and air force.

**Himmler, Heinrich** — Leading Nazi. In charge of the SS and the concentration camps.

**Hindenburg, Paul von** — Commander of German forces in World War I. President, 1925–34.

**Hitler, Adolf** — Leader of the National Socialist or Nazi Party. Fuehrer of Germany, 1934–45.

**Luxemburg, Rosa** — Leader of the Spartacists with Karl Liebknecht. Murdered in January 1920.

**Papen, Franz von** — Chancellor, 1932. Persuaded Hindenburg to accept Hitler as Chancellor.

**Stresemann, Gustav** — Dominant figure in German politics, 1924–29, chiefly as Foreign Minister.

## The Birth of the Weimar Republic: Revolution and Counter-revolution

By the end of September 1918 it was obvious to the German High Command that Germany could not win the First World War. They urged that a civilian government be put in place to seek an armistice. This would take the responsibility for surrendering away from the army leaders. Other events that occurred at this time were:

- ◆ 1 October — Prince Max von Baden became Chancellor, the Social Democrats (Majority Socialists) were included in the Cabinet;
- ◆ 28 October — sailors at the Kiel naval base mutinied after they had been ordered to sea, revolution spread to other towns throughout Germany;
- ◆ 9 November — general strike in Berlin, the Kaiser abdicated, Friedrich Ebert, the Majority Socialist (SPD) leader, became Chancellor, Germany became a republic;
- ◆ 11 November — armistice signed, World War I ended.

### Groener–Ebert Pact

The new SPD Government had no means to enforce its authority. On 9 November, Ebert and General Groener, the Army Chief-of-Staff, made an agreement:

- ◆ Ebert would resist calls to alter the traditional officer corps;
- ◆ the Government would support the maintenance of discipline in the army;
- ◆ the army would assist the Government in suppressing left-wing extremism.

### Stinnes–Legien Pact

The Government also sought peace on the industrial front with the Stinnes–Legien Pact which stated that:

- ◆ employers recognised the bargaining rights of trade unions and granted an eight-hour day for employees;
- ◆ the workers promised industrial peace and agreed not to support the extremist demands for workers' councils.

### The Weimar Government — Violent Beginnings

Elections in January produced the first republican government. The Parliament met in the quiet town of Weimar, away from the turbulent streets of Berlin.

Scheidemann became chancellor and Ebert became the first president of the Weimar Republic. The republican Government faced challenges from various political extremists in its early years:

- ◆ In January 1919 the Spartacists (German communists) tried to mount a revolution in Berlin. Their leaders, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, were both captured and shot. The Government used irregular volunteer soldiers known as the 'Freikorps' to suppress the Spartacists.
- ◆ In May 1919 the Freikorps were also used to suppress the Bavarian Socialist Republic which had come into being in November 1918.
- ◆ In March 1920 a right-wing coup was attempted by Gustav Kapp, supported by Freikorps units in Berlin. The regular army refused to assist the Government, saying 'Reichswehr does not fire on Reichswehr'. The workers of Berlin brought the Kapp Putsch to an end by organising a general strike which effectively brought the city to a standstill. On 17 March Kapp fled to Sweden.
- ◆ Political violence became a regular feature of the early years of the Republic: between 1918 and 1922 there were 354 political murders.

In the midst of these challenges from political extremists, another blow was delivered by the Treaty of Versailles, which was issued to the German Government for comment on 7 May 1919.

### The Treaty of Versailles

The treaty was drawn up by the victorious powers after the First World War. Its terms required the Germans to:

- ◆ surrender various German-speaking territories to France, Belgium, Denmark and the new state of Poland;
- ◆ demilitarise the Rhineland, which was occupied by the Allied powers;
- ◆ reduce their army to 100 000 men and their navy to six battleships, and entirely disperse their air force and submarines;
- ◆ hand over all of their overseas colonies to the Allies;
- ◆ make reparation of 6600 million pounds, to be paid either in cash or goods;
- ◆ accept full responsibility, in accordance with the 'war-guilt' clause of the treaty, for causing the war.

The Germans protested strongly against the terms but could change little in the face of Allied threats to resume hostilities. On 28 June 1919, in the Palace of Versailles, just outside Paris, the text of the treaty was signed.

### The Effects of the Signing

The Germans were stunned by the harshness of the Versailles Treaty and looked for someone to blame. The assertion spread that it was all the fault of the 'November Criminals' — the socialist politicians who had negotiated and signed the armistice in November 1918. It was also said that Germany had been 'stabbed in the back' by a conspiracy of communists and Jews — only in this way could Germany's helpless position in June 1919 be explained for many Germans.

### The Weimar Constitution

The Weimar Constitution was drawn up in August 1919 for the new Republic of Germany. It gave the vote to all people over twenty years of age and specified that the proportional representation system of voting would be used. This led to a multi-party parliament and coalition government, with frequent elections as coalitions dissolved and reformed. Article 48 of the Constitution allowed the elected president to:

- ◆ appoint and dismiss the chancellor;
- ◆ suspend the rights of citizens if law and order were seriously disturbed;
- ◆ rule by decree (i.e. proclaim laws without consulting Parliament).



**CHECKPOINT 4.1**

What role did the Freikorps play in the early life of the Weimar Republic?  
What does this indicate about the authority of the Government?

**The Occupation of the Ruhr**

In January 1923, alleging that a reparations consignment of telegraph poles had not been delivered, French and Belgian troops occupied Germany's main industrial region, the Ruhr. The German Government ordered a policy of passive resistance from the workers. The French retaliated with arrests and shootings, but were unable to secure the normal resumption of work. By the end of March they were receiving only one per cent of the coal deliveries they had previously enjoyed from the Ruhr.

From an economic viewpoint, the occupation was a failure for the French. The result was even worse for Germany: the almost total halt in production in the Ruhr caused the German economy to collapse, and led to the disaster of hyperinflation.

**The Hyperinflation of 1923**

The value of the German mark had already begun to fall before the occupation of the Ruhr. In July 1922, one American dollar bought 550 German marks; by December 1922 the rate had increased to 7500 marks. The events in the Ruhr worsened the economic situation and, as the richest part of Germany was no longer producing goods, prices began to spiral. The Government reacted firstly by printing more paper money, then, when this proved inadequate to meet the demand, old notes were overprinted with new inflated values. In November 1923 it was possible to obtain a one billion mark note, but even this was not enough to buy a loaf of bread. Hyperinflation had the following effects:

- ◆ the official exchange rate changed several times daily;
  - ◆ workers were paid daily in an effort to retain purchasing power;
  - ◆ shopping expeditions required suitcases of money;
  - ◆ alternative forms of 'money', e.g. butter or cigarettes, were unofficially used.
- Many suffered, but some benefited, in the hyperinflation. Those who gained by hyperinflation were:
- ◆ people living in rented accommodation on fixed rents;
  - ◆ export businesses that could undercut competition in foreign markets;
  - ◆ anyone with access to dollars or pounds sterling, who became rich immediately;
  - ◆ large businesses that could acquire loans, purchase assets, and make repayments later for a tiny proportion of the original sum;
  - ◆ landowners, large and small, who were paying off mortgages.

Those who lost from hyperinflation were:

- ◆ people living on fixed incomes, e.g. pensions;
- ◆ the middle class, many of whom saw their savings vanish;
- ◆ wage earners (in November 1923 real wages were down twenty-five per cent compared to figures in 1913).

Hyperinflation was halted by Gustav Stresemann, who was Chancellor from August to November 1923. He called off the passive resistance in the Ruhr, thereby enabling production to resume, and halted financial speculation by introducing a new currency ('Rentenmark') in November 1923.

**CHECKPOINT 4.2**

List some of the complaints that an opponent of the Republic might have made about Weimar Governments in the period 1919–23.

**The Rise of Nazism****Hitler's Background**

- ◆ born in Braunau, Austria, on 20 April 1889;
- ◆ lived as a tramp in Vienna before moving to Germany;
- ◆ served in the German army from 1914 to 1918, reaching the rank of corporal;
- ◆ awarded the Iron Cross, First Class;
- ◆ in hospital, temporarily blinded by gas, at the end of the war.

**The Twenty-five Point Program**

Hitler joined the German Workers' Party in 1919 and soon became its leader. He renamed it the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) — more commonly known as the Nazi Party — and set out the Twenty-five Point Program, designed to attract a wide variety of support, which called for:

- ◆ strong leadership from a central government;
- ◆ the abolition of the Treaty of Versailles;
- ◆ the unification of all Germans in a greater Germany;
- ◆ anti-capitalist measures such as land reform, profit sharing, and the abolition of unearned income;
- ◆ welfare provisions such as pensions for the aged;
- ◆ anti-Semitic views — no Jew could be a member of the German nation.

**The Munich Putsch**

In November 1923 Hitler attempted to seize power in the southern city of Munich. The attempt failed and he was arrested and charged with treason. However, the trial was a propaganda success for Hitler. He drew applause in the courtroom and sympathy from the judges when he used the opportunity to proclaim his aim to restore Germany's national pride. He received the minimum sentence of five years imprisonment, of which he served nine months. While in prison, he wrote *Mein Kampf*, a book setting out his views on Germany's future.

**CHECKPOINT 4.3**

Explain how the Twenty-five Point Program and the Munich Putsch increased the Nazis' appeal to the German people.

**The Stresemann Era 1924–29**

These years in the Weimar Republic under the guidance of Gustav Stresemann, Chancellor from August to November 1923 and Foreign Minister in all succeeding governments until his death in October 1929, are often seen as a period of prosperity.

Stresemann detested the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and advocated a policy of fulfilment (meeting the requirements of the victorious powers as long as it served Germany's greater interest). This policy had positive consequences in several areas:

- ◆ Because of the Dawes Plan of 1924, annual reparations payments were fixed at a level within Germany's capacity to pay. In return for its compliance, Germany received an assurance from France that the Ruhr would be evacuated within a year (the last French troops withdrew in July 1925).
- ◆ The Young Plan of 1929 placed a time limit on reparations payments, requiring an annual repayment until 1988. In return, the Allies agreed to remove



their military occupation of the Rhineland by June 1930, five years earlier than the date laid down in the Treaty of Versailles.

- ◆ The Locarno Treaties of October 1925 confirmed the inviolability of the Franco-German and Belgo-German frontiers, giving France the assurance it sought that there would be no repetition of the invasions of 1870 and 1914. From the German point of view, the Treaties meant that there would be no repeat of the humiliating invasion of the Ruhr. In 1926, Germany was admitted to the League of Nations.
- ◆ Cultural pursuits flourished in Germany in the 1920s. Berlin became famous for its theatres and music and for its literary and artistic life. Sexuality entered a permissive phase, and architecture and science flourished. Seven Nobel Prizes were won by German scientists between 1919 and 1929.

### The Stresemann Era — An Alternative View

However, under a superficial layer of peace and prosperity, social and political resentment against the policies of the Weimar Government continued to grow in some sections of the community.

- ◆ The democratic system was unable to provide stable domestic government. The period 1924–30 saw a succession of brief coalition governments that often divided over some aspect of domestic or foreign affairs.
- ◆ Industrial relations deteriorated. During the mid-1920s, employers pushed for a longer working day and resisted claims for higher wages. The union movement opposed this stance and industrial disputation increased. Employers sought a right-wing solution to the problem — the curbing of the workers' movement and a more authoritarian form of government.
- ◆ The new 'avant garde' culture polarised German society. A basically conservative population associated 'modernism' with decadence, and blamed the Weimar system for introducing it into their midst.
- ◆ Many of the influential institutions of the Weimar Republic were filled with those who owed their loyalty to the former monarchical regime. Among these were members of the higher civil service, the judiciary, and university staff, who became increasingly right wing as their world and values seemed to disappear.
- ◆ The economic dependence on foreign loans was imprudent. Germany prospered only as long as foreign aid flowed. Stresemann described this situation as Germany 'dancing on the edge of a volcano'. As a result of this policy, economic problems developed with the onset of the Great Depression at the end of 1929.

Conservatives were constantly critical of Stresemann's fulfilment policy, especially in regard to reparations, which they saw as capitulation to the Allies. The historian Kolb makes this judgment:

[T]owards the end of the Stresemann era, and before the onset of the world depression, storm clouds already darkened the sky in Germany: the . . . agitation of the political right stirred up a wave of aggressive revisionism which threw doubt on the possibility of continuing a foreign policy based on conciliation. Even if it had been Stresemann's lot to conduct Germany's foreign affairs for a longer period, his policy of compromise and cautious steps towards the restoration of German power would have involved violent battles against increasing resistance on the home front.

Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, translated by P. S. Falla (Routledge, London, 1988), p. 64.

### Steps Leading to the Collapse of Democracy 1930–33

The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 crippled the economy: foreign loans dried up, industries closed and unemployment soared. Economic instability was mirrored in the political scene.

### The Influence of Hindenburg

President Hindenburg, who succeeded Ebert in 1925, favoured an authoritarian style of government and disliked the majority Social Democrat Party. His friends and advisers were Junkers (eastern landowners), industrialists, and politically-minded officers of the Reichswehr led by General von Schleicher. They also favoured a conservative government.

In March 1930, Brüning became Chancellor. He was a monarchist, with little attachment to the republican ideal. Under him, the number of unemployed rose from 2 258 000 in March 1930 to 6 031 000 in March 1932. He ignored the Reichstag and used Article 48 of the constitution, with Hindenburg's consent, to rule by decree.

### Nazi Power Increases

Meanwhile, the Nazi Party had begun to gain support in the difficult times. They used the agricultural depression of 1926 to win favour in the rural areas and smaller towns by developing policies that favoured the small farmer. Their success continued and in the September 1930 elections, they won 107 seats, thereby becoming the second largest party, after the Social Democrats.

Brüning was dismissed, a victim of political intrigue, in May 1932. He was replaced by Franz von Papen, although General Schleicher was the main force behind the scenes.

The election in July 1932 made the Nazis the largest single party in the Reichstag, with 230 seats. The Nazis and the communists, both sworn enemies of the Republic, controlled fifty-two per cent of the Reichstag: the Weimar Republic was effectively dead.

Hindenburg, who disliked Hitler, refused to have him as Chancellor, and von Papen continued in that role. Another election in November 1932 saw the Nazi vote fall by two million, giving the Party a total of 196 seats, though they still remained the largest party in the Reichstag. General Schleicher replaced von Papen as Chancellor in December, but his attempts to rule by emergency decree were thwarted by Hindenburg.

Von Papen persuaded Hindenburg to accept a coalition with Hitler as Chancellor, but surrounded by experienced conservatives such as von Papen (as Vice-Chancellor) and Hugenberg.

### Hitler Becomes Chancellor

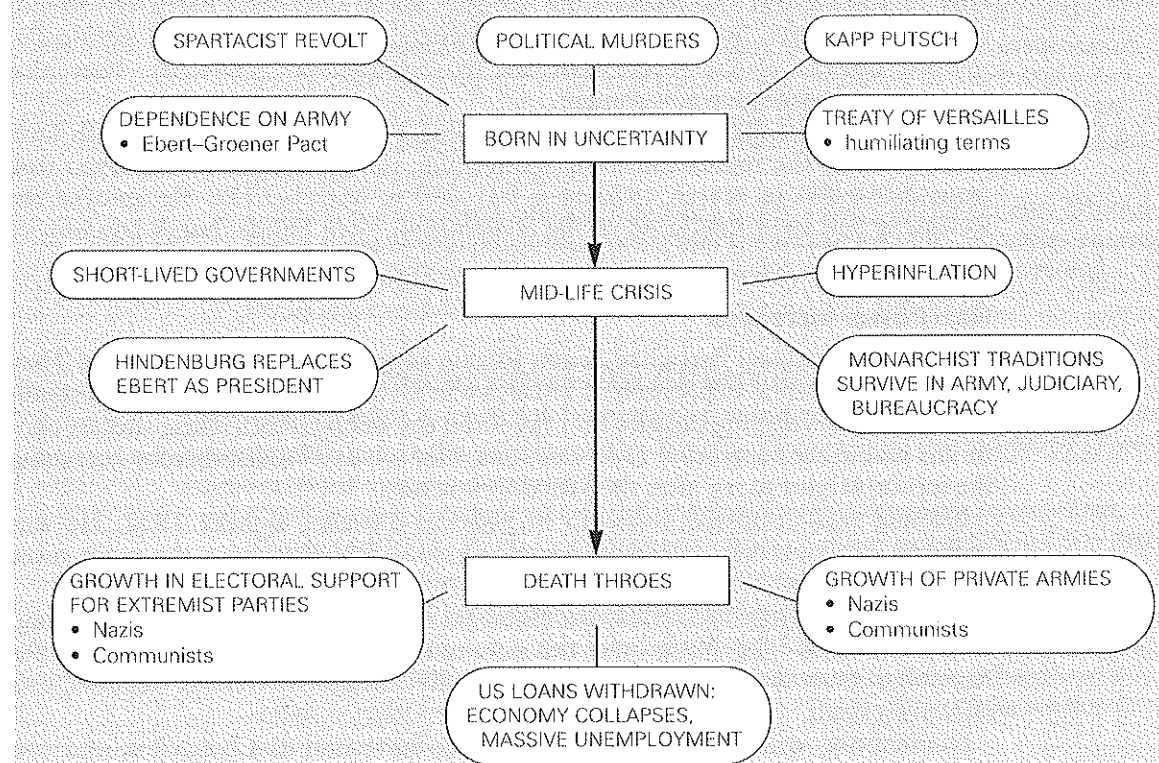
Adolf Hitler became Chancellor on 30 January 1933. Although he came to power legally, he had never been able to secure a majority of votes in the electorate or a seat in the Reichstag. He was successful because the old élite of the army, land, and industry were determined to replace the Weimar democracy with an authoritarian system.

#### CHECKPOINT 4.4

- 1 What was the major difference between the Dawes Plan and the Young Plan?
- 2 List some of the foreign policy achievements of Stresemann.
- 3 What arguments can be made for considering each of the following dates as marking the 'end of the Weimar Republic'?
  - ◆ March 1930
  - ◆ July 1932
  - ◆ January 1933



### The Troubled Life of the Weimar Republic



#### The Nazis Consolidate Power

After becoming Chancellor, Hitler demanded an election. Prior to the election, several factors strengthened the Nazi hold on power:

- ♦ the Decree for the Protection of the German People (4 February) gave the Government wide powers to ban newspapers and public meetings;
- ♦ the Reichstag was destroyed by fire (27 February). A young Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, admitted responsibility, though historians debate whether the Nazis were secretly involved;
- ♦ Hitler alleged that there was a communist plot to overthrow the government. Over 4000 communists were arrested, the party offices were closed and their publications banned;
- ♦ Hitler secured another emergency decree that suspended the fundamental rights of the citizen until further notice. This decree was never repealed.

#### The Enabling Act

The March election gave the Nazis 43.9 per cent of the vote. As communists were prevented from taking their seats, the Nazis had a majority. Hitler was determined to dismantle the Reichstag and called for an Enabling Act. This was passed by the Reichstag on 23 March, with only the Social Democrats opposing it. The new Act transferred the powers to enact laws from the Parliament to the Government, i.e. Hitler.

#### Removal of Other Political Parties

Between March and July 1933 other political parties were dissolved, either voluntarily or by force. The Law Against the New Formation of Parties was introduced in July 1933. Nazi governors replaced elected state parliaments.

## The Imposition of Dictatorship

The Nazis were determined to suppress any opposition to their regime and used the following party organisations to enforce their rule:

- ♦ the SA (Storm-Troopers or 'Brownshirts') — formed in 1921 as the private army of the Nazi Party. After 1933 the SA was used for a time to run the concentration camps, before this job was taken over by the SS. After 1934, the organisation was used for public order duties and took the lead in anti-Jewish activities;
- ♦ the SS (Protection Units or 'Blackshirts') — founded in 1925 as Hitler's body-guard, but rapidly expanded in number. The SS was developed as an élite force of racially pure members. Heinrich Himmler was appointed Reichsfuehrer of the SS in 1929;
- ♦ the Gestapo — established in April 1933. Its job was to eradicate opposition to the regime. It was placed under the command of Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's deputy;
- ♦ concentration camps — set up to receive the 'enemies of the state' arrested by the Gestapo. The first of these was opened at Dachau in 1933;
- ♦ block leaders — appointed in each neighbourhood to supervise forty or fifty families each. They were also expected to monitor subversive or malicious talk and to report this to the Gestapo.

### The Ending of SA Power — 'The Night of the Long Knives'

By 1934 the SA, which had grown to two-and-a-half million members under the leadership of Ernst Rohm, was becoming a serious embarrassment to Hitler. Rohm wanted to carry out a 'second revolution' in order to place the SA at the core of the army ('Reichswehr'). The Reichswehr generals opposed this plan. The army was a powerful influence in Germany and Hitler did not wish to alienate its leaders. He made an agreement whereby he would end the SA threat to the army if they would support his bid for the presidency after Hindenburg's death.

On 30 June, in the 'The Night of the Long Knives', many leading SA members, including Rohm, were shot by the SS on Hitler's orders. Hitler admitted to the deaths of seventy-seven people (the total was probably nearer seven hundred).

On 2 August, Hindenburg died. Hitler took over his office and became the Fuehrer of the German Reich and People.

### The Process of Gleichschaltung (Coordination)

'Gleichschaltung' aimed to coordinate all aspects of German life in conformity with Nazi ideals.

#### Women

- ♦ The woman's role was to be that of wife and mother.
- ♦ Women doctors, civil servants, etc. were dismissed.
- ♦ Marriage loans, maternity grants and family allowances were paid to persuade women to leave the workforce.
- ♦ By 1937, when the country was facing a labour shortage, industry began to recruit women to work in factories.

#### Youth and Education

- ♦ Non-Nazi teachers were dismissed.
- ♦ Baldur von Schirach set up the Hitler Youth in July 1933. Boys took part in camping expeditions and underwent a form of military training between the



ages of fourteen and eighteen. Girls belonged to the League of German Girls, practised gymnastics and learned domestic skills.

- ◆ In 1936, membership of the Hitler Youth became compulsory for all boys and girls between the ages of ten and eighteen.

### The Church

- ◆ Hitler made a Concordat (treaty) with the Pope in July 1933 by which full religious freedom was promised in return for non-interference in politics.
- ◆ However, Catholic schools were soon taken over, religious teaching banned, and some priests arrested.
- ◆ The Protestant Church was replaced by the Reich Church under Ludwig Muller in 1933. Two Berlin pastors, Martin Niemoller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, formed the Confessional Church as a rival to the Reich Church. This was declared illegal and both pastors were sent to concentration camps.

### Propaganda

- ◆ Joseph Goebbels was appointed Minister of Information and Propaganda.
- ◆ In May 1933, public book burnings took place, in which the works of Jewish and other black-listed authors were destroyed.
- ◆ Public parades and spectacles were held, most famous of which was the annual Nuremburg Party Rally.
- ◆ Propaganda films were made including 'Triumph of the Will' (by Leni Riefenstahl in 1934) and a film of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, which was portrayed as a triumph for the Nazis.
- ◆ Newspapers, radio and films were strictly censored.
- ◆ A cheap radio, the 'Volksempfänger' ('People's Receiver') was produced which enabled most households to hear Nazi broadcasts.
- ◆ In the cinema, Goebbels favoured films that entertained or that carried a message wrapped in a historical drama.

### The Economy

In 1933 there were six million people unemployed. By 1936, the figure had been reduced to one million, and by 1939, Germany was short of labour. Several methods were used to reduce the number of unemployed:

- ◆ half a million men were recruited into the army after the introduction of conscription in March 1935;
- ◆ many people found jobs at the various levels of the expanding Nazi bureaucracy;
- ◆ young people aged between seventeen and twenty-five spent six months in labour camps doing 'voluntary work';
- ◆ women were forced out of the workforce, to be replaced by men;
- ◆ many people found work on the public works schemes, e.g. autobahn construction.

Trade unions were replaced by the German Labour Front in May 1933. Strikes were forbidden and wage rates were set by Reich Trustees of Labour.

Hitler's main economic priority was rearmament and he required the reorganisation of the economy towards that end. Changes involved:

- ◆ the increase of government investment in the armaments industry;
- ◆ the curbing of consumer industries;
- ◆ the adoption of the principle of autarky (self-reliance) in 1935 so that Germany would not be dependent on other nations in the event of war;
- ◆ the development of ersatz (substitute) materials, even when uneconomic, to enhance self-sufficiency;

- ◆ the adoption of the Four-year Economic Plan in 1936, aimed at achieving all economic objectives.

Full employment by the late 1930s led to employers illegally increasing the wages of skilled workers. Expenditure on consumer goods began to increase rapidly in 1938–39 and inflationary pressures also rose. By 1939, the German economy was in trouble.

### Nazi Ideology and the Fuehrer Myth

Nazi ideology was based on several key presumptions:

- ◆ a rejection of liberalism and subjection to the authoritarian rule of the leader;
- ◆ rural life was more virtuous than the decadent city life;
- ◆ a belief in the primacy of the German volk (folk) — the German race (the Aryan race) was the foundation of all true culture.

'Fuehrerprinzip', the principle that Hitler adopted as the basis of the Nazi Party, placed all authority in the hands of the Party's leader. Hitler's authority derived from his exceptional, charismatic gifts as a person, recognised and accepted by all members of the Party.

The image of Hitler was a myth; a combination of genuine popular belief and sophisticated manipulation. Hitler was seen as the architect of Germany's recovery and personally incorruptible — yet a man of the people. His popularity fluctuated, but was always well ahead of that of the Nazi Party.

### Racial Theories and the Jews

The Jews, according to Nazi philosophy, defiled the purity of the Aryan race by their very existence in Germany. Anti-Semitic views struck a sympathetic chord among many Germans, and it was generally accepted when increasingly harsh measures were adopted by the Nazis against the Jews:

- ◆ 1933 — a one-day boycott of Jewish shops, Jews banned from the civil service;
- ◆ 1935 — the Nuremburg Laws deprived Jews of German citizenship and forbade their marriage to non-Jews;
- ◆ 1938 — the murder of a German embassy official in Paris by a Jew led to 'Kristallnacht' (the smashing of Jewish shop windows and the burning of synagogues throughout Germany). A fine of one thousand million marks was levied on the Jewish population of Germany.

Left without jobs or education, almost 120 000 Jews left Germany in 1938–39. Poorer Jews could not afford to leave and it was often difficult for the emigrants to find countries which would accept them.

### Nazism as Totalitarianism

Did the Nazis establish a **totalitarian** state in Germany? Historians have debated this question.

Arguments for a totalitarian state:

- ◆ No other political parties were allowed to exist.
- ◆ The government held a monopoly of the mass media through effective propaganda and censorship.
- ◆ Fear and terror were used to prevent the growth of opposition.
- ◆ Hitler rarely consulted the Cabinet before making a decision. In 1936 only four Cabinet meetings were held. The last one was held on 5 February 1938.
- ◆ Hitler's reputation and popularity placed him above the Party and other Nazis in public esteem. His word, once given, was law.

Arguments against a totalitarian state:



- ♦ The Church was never made completely subservient to Nazi ideals. Bishop von Galen of Munster spoke out against the Nazis, and some members of the Confessional Church maintained their opposition even though their church was banned.
- ♦ Hitler detested administration and bureaucracy. There was little order in the power and authority structure of the state:
  - ♦ The 'Gauleiters' (Nazi regional governors) frequently argued with the central authority in Berlin and ignored instructions from them.
  - ♦ With no clear hierarchy of leadership, prominent Nazis concentrated on building up their own 'empires' and continually feuded to gain control over each others' 'territories'. Goering, (responsible for the Four-year Economic Plan and chief of the air force), Himmler (head of the police force and SS), Ley (organiser of the Labour Front), and Goebbels (controller of propaganda and culture), among others, behaved in this way.
  - ♦ Hitler refused to be involved in the day-to-day business of government, leaving decisions to a variety of subordinates.
- ♦ Totalitarianism implies a form of government imposed on a passive people. Hitler was a truly popular leader whose achievements were supported by the majority of the people.
- ♦ Despite the fact that membership of the Hitler Youth was made compulsory in 1936, over three million young people were kept outside the organisation by their parents by the end of 1937.

The historian Alan Bullock offers the following conclusion:

The result, made worse by Hitler's own unpredictable interventions, has been variously described as 'authoritarian anarchy', 'permanent improvisation', 'administrative chaos'. However described, this polycratic state, with competing centres of power, was very different from the outside world's picture of a monolithic, totalitarian state run with typical German efficiency.

Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (Fontana Press, London, 1993), p. 457.



#### CHECKPOINT 4.5:

- 1 Identify the leading Nazis who occupied the following positions:
  - i Head of the SS
  - ii Head of the Gestapo
  - iii Head of the Hitler Youth
  - iv Head of the Reich Church
  - v Minister of Propaganda
  - vi Chief of the Air Force
  - vii Head of the Labour Corps.
- 2 Despite the use of forceful methods, the Nazis enjoyed genuine popularity. Suggest reasons why this was so.

### Foreign Policy

Hitler's foreign policy had several objectives, all of which were linked to his aim of making Germany a dominant power in the world:

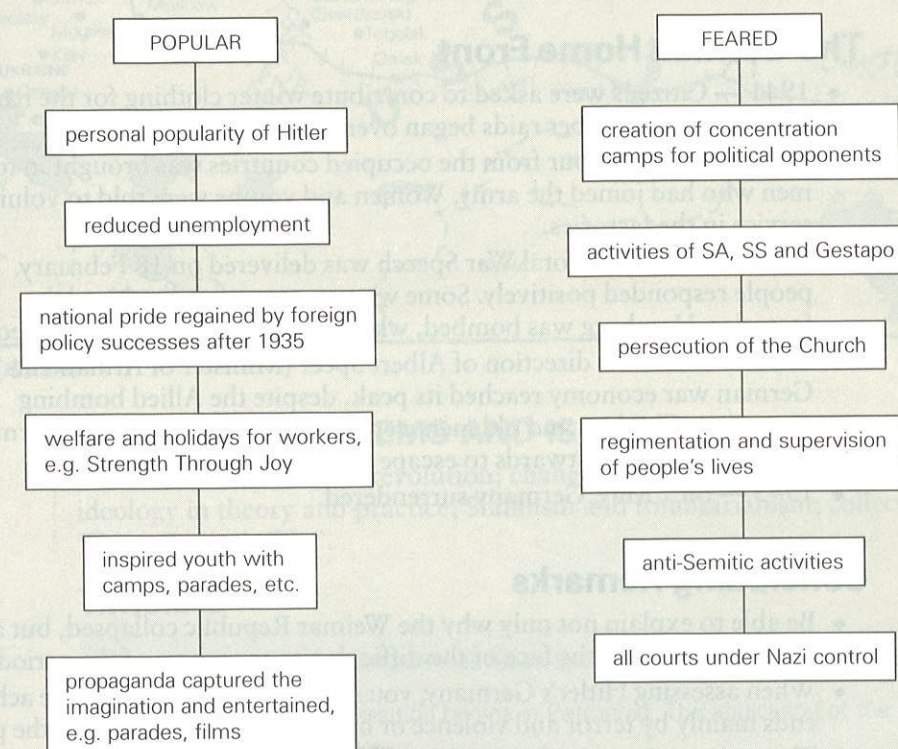
- to remove the restrictions and limitations placed upon the country by the Treaty of Versailles;

- to bring all German-speaking people together in a 'Greater Germany';
- to secure 'Lebensraum' (living space) for the new expanding Germany by taking territory in the east from the racially inferior Slavs.

As a result of Germany's foreign policy, the following events occurred:

- March 1935 — Hitler reintroduced conscription, defying the Versailles Treaty.
- March 1936 — German troops reoccupied the Rhineland.
- March 1938 — Austria was incorporated into the German Reich.
- September 1938 — the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia was given to Germany at the Munich Conference.
- March 1939 — German troops occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia.
- September 1939 — Germany attacked Poland, which had received a guarantee of support from Britain. World War II began.

### Hitler's Reich (1933–39) — Popular or Feared?



### Germany at War 1939–45

The period from 1939 to 1941 saw the expansion of Germany. Blitzkrieg tactics overcame Poland, Denmark, Norway and France. The invasion of Britain was postponed after the Battle of Britain, though bombing of British cities continued.

In June 1941, Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union. Early success was halted by the onset of winter. By the end of 1941, Hitler's



armies had conquered Greece and Yugoslavia and the Nazi Empire stood at its height. In December 1941 Germany declared war against the United States of America.

From 1942 to 1945, the German war effort was in decline. In 1942 the Germans were defeated at Stalingrad and El Alamein. British and American troops marched on Germany from the west after the D-Day Landings in northern France (1944), while Russia advanced from the east. On 30 April 1945, with the Russians in the streets of Berlin, Hitler committed suicide, and on 7 May Germany surrendered.

### The Final Solution

With the invasion of the Soviet Union, four 'Einsatzgruppen' (Special Units) were formed from the SS and the Gestapo. They followed behind the invading armies with orders to kill Communist Party officials, resistance fighters and Jews. This was done by mass shootings. By their own claims, the Einsatzgruppen killed 700 000 people, mostly Jews in the USSR, between June 1941 and April 1942.

At Wannsee on 20 January 1942, the 'Final Solution' was outlined. Extermination camps were set up in occupied Poland. Jews were sent to them from all over German-occupied Europe. Approximately 6 million Jews were gassed.

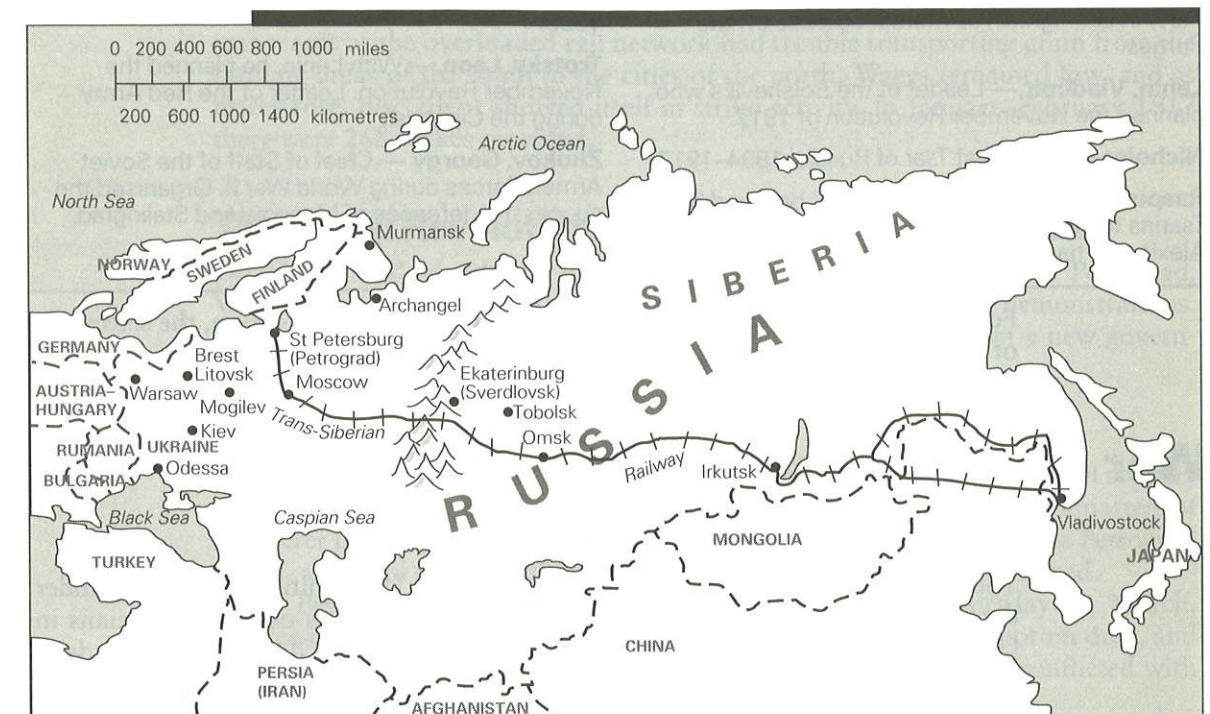
### The German Home Front

- ◆ 1941 — Citizens were asked to contribute winter clothing for the troops in Russia. Allied bomber raids began over Germany.
- ◆ 1942 — forced labour from the occupied countries was brought in to replace men who had joined the army. Women and youths were told to volunteer for service in the factories.
- ◆ 1943 — Goebbels' Total War Speech was delivered on 18 February. The people responded positively. Some women were mobilised into the factories. Hamburg was bombed, while fire storms killed 40 000 people.
- ◆ 1944 — under the direction of Albert Speer (Minister of Armaments), the German war economy reached its peak, despite the Allied bombing campaign. Children and old men were given weapons training. German refugees flowed westwards to escape the advancing Russians.
- ◆ 1945 — on 7 May, Germany surrendered.

### Concluding Remarks

- ◆ Be able to explain not only why the Weimar Republic collapsed, but also why it lasted so long in the face of the difficult circumstances of the period.
- ◆ When assessing Hitler's Germany, you should consider whether he achieved his ends mainly by terror and violence or by genuine popularity with the people.
- ◆ Throughout the period, the influence of the politically conservative German army should be traced — from direct intervention against leftists to the careers of prominent individuals such as Hindenburg and von Schleicher.

# 5 20th Century National Studies — Russia/Soviet Union



Russia in 1914.

### RELEVANT PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Revolution and counter-revolution; changes in society; role of the Party and state; ideology in theory and practice; Stalinism and totalitarianism; collectivisation; the 'Great Patriotic War'.

### Timeline

- **1905** — A year of disturbances leads to the October Manifesto, granting a Duma.
- **1917 (Mar.)** — Revolution begins in Petrograd. The abdication of the Tsar.
- **1917 (Nov.)** — The Bolshevik Revolution overthrows the Provisional Government.
- **1918–20** — Civil War in Russia. Introduction of War Communism.
- **1921** — Introduction of New Economic Policy.
- **1924** — Death of Lenin.
- **1928** — The Five-year Plans begin, affecting industry and agriculture.
- **1934** — The murder of Kirov activates the purges.
- **1941** — Germany invades the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa).
- **1942** — The Germans defeated at Stalingrad. A turning point of World War II.